

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 02044 251638Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 DLOS-06 OES-06 EB-08 IO-13
/102 W

-----260657Z 104857 /23-12

R 251600Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6173
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
USCINCEUR
USCINCNAVEUR
AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 2044

ALSO FOR POLADS

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR MARR TS SU LY
SUBJ: SOVIET VICE MINISTER OF DEFENSE VISITS TUNIS

1. SERGEI GORCHKOV, SOVIET VICE MINISTER OF DEFENSE
AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE SOVIET NAVY, VISITEJ TUNIS
FROM MARCH 18 TO 24 AT THE INVITATION OF THE TUNISIAN
NAVY'S CHIEF OF STAFF BECHIR JEDIDI. GORCHKOV'S VISIT
RECIPOROCATED JEDIDI'S VISIT TO THE USSR LAST SUMMER.
WHILE IN TUNISIA, GORCHKOV CALLED ON PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA,
PRIME MINISTER NOURIA, DESTOURIAN SOCIALIST PARTY DIRECTOR
MOHAMED SAYAH AND ON DEFENSE MINISTER ABDALLAH FARHAT.
GORCHKOV ALSO VISITED BIZERTE, WHERE HE INSPECTED TUNISIAN
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PAGE 02 TUNIS 02044 251638Z

NAVAL FACILITIES AND A SOVIET DAM CONSTRUCTION PROJECT,
AND SOUSSE, WHERE HE INSPECTED INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL
PROJECTS. DURING HIS CALL ON BOURGUIBA, GORCHKOV WAS
MADE A GRAND OFFICER OF THE REPUBLIC, AND SAME DECORATION
GIVEN TO THE U.S. CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS ADMIRAL
HOLLOWAY ON HIS RECENT VISIT TO TUNIS (SEE TUNIS1788).

2. FEW PUBLIC STATEMENTS WERE MADE BY THE SOVIETS OR TUNISIANS DURING GORCHKOV'S VISIT. ON HIS ARRIVAL GORCHKOV SAID HE HOPED VISIT WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO A BETTER MUTUAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. AFTER CALLING ON PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA, GORCHKOV SAID HE HAD EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR THE WELCOME GIVEN TO SOVIET NAVY VESSELS IN TUNISIAN PORTS. GORCHKOV, WHOSE VISIT ALSO FELL ON TUNISIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY, EXPRESSED CONGRATULATIONS ON THAT EVENT.

3. WE UNDERSTAND THAT GORCHKOV'S VISIT WAS PRINCIPALLY RECIPROCATION OF JEDIDI'S VISIT LAST YEAR AND THAT HE USED THE OCCASION PRIMARILY TO PROMOTE CONTINUED ACCESS FOR SOVIET NAVY TO TUNISIAN PORTS.

4. GOT GAVE GORCHKOV VISIT, WHICH LASTED A WHOLE WEEK, WIDE MEDIA COVERAGE. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE RELATIVE SHORTNESS OF ADMIRAL HOLLOWAY'S VISIT, HOWEVER, THE COVERAGE WAS ABOUT EQUAL EXCEPT FOR A FULL-PAGE ARTICLE (SOURCED TO NOVOSTI) THAT APPEARED IN THE SEMI-INDEPENDENT DAILY LE TEMPS GIVING GORCHKOV'S BIOGRAPHY AND DESCRIBING HOW THE SOVIET NAVY LIVES UP TO THE IDEALS OF LENIN.

5. THE TIMING OF THE GORCHKOV AND HOLLOWAY VISITS, PLUS THE VISIT HERE FROM MARCH 21 TO 24 OF THE ITALIAN DEFENSE MINISTER (SEE TUNIS 2043), WITHIN RELATIVELY SHORT PERIOD APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN PLANNED BY GOT TO BOWL COLONEL QUDHAFI OVER WITH GRAPHIC EVIDENCE THAT TUNISIA HAS MANY FRIENDS AND DOES NOT STAND ALONE INTS DISPUTE WITH LIBYA OVER THE CONTINENTAL SHELF.

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PAGE 03 TUNIS 02044 251638Z

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